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SUPPORT - HB-5055- AN ACT ELIMINATING MUNICIPAL MANDATES

Connecticut's small towns and cities are once again facing enormous pressure to hold the line on local budget and property tax increases. State aid to municipalities has been largely flat funded for more than a decade, requiring towns to absorb the increased costs associated with delivering critical education, public health and safety services.

Towns are looking for ways to do more with less. Unfortunately, unfunded state mandates continue to drive up local costs beyond the control of our small towns and cities. Connecticut must help to relieve some of the burden on our small towns and cities by providing relief from unfunded mandates and refraining from adopting any new unfunded mandates, however well-intentioned.

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) therefore urges support for the Governor's bill, HB-5055, An Act Eliminating Municipal Mandates. The bill includes the following mandate relief measures:

- **Repeals Section 7-163b, CGS, which requires municipalities to report to the CT Siting Council on the location, type and height of each existing telecommunications tower and each existing and proposed antenna subject to local jurisdiction.** The CT Siting Council refers municipalities, which generally don't have this information readily available, to its database for the information. Inasmuch as the Council already has this information and is the permitting authority of record, the annual reporting requirement is unnecessary.
- **Eliminates the fee imposed by the state Department of Motor Vehicles on municipalities for the operation of the state program that blocks people with unpaid parking tickets from registering their motor vehicles.** The elimination of this fee is estimated to save municipalities \$800,000 per year.

In addition to these provisions, COST urges lawmakers to provide towns with additional relief from unfunded mandates and improve the process for determining and carefully considering the impact of a proposed mandate on our cities and towns. The following are COST's top mandate relief priorities:

1. Strengthen mechanisms to ensure that the legislature carefully considers the fiscal impact of legislation on municipalities;
2. Review recommendations for implementing the Uniform Chart of Accounts to determine

- whether implementation should be delayed or repealed based on costs to municipalities;
3. Address inequities in the Municipal Employees Retirement System by adjusting mandated employee contribution rates;
 4. Increase the Prevailing Wage Threshold on municipal public works projects to \$1 million for new construction and \$400,000 for renovations and index the threshold to the annual inflation rate;
 5. Give towns more flexibility under the Minimum Budget Requirement to reduce education budgets to reflect cost-efficiencies;
 6. Adjust existing binding arbitration laws to reduce burdens on municipalities;
 7. Address escalating health insurance costs by exempting municipal health insurance policies from the insurance premium tax;
 8. Eliminate the property storage mandate which requires towns to store the possessions of evicted tenants;
 9. Assist municipalities in meeting mandated wastewater phosphorus limits by ensuring that all projects receive a greater percentage of Clean Water funds; and
 10. Eliminate or streamline unnecessary and/or burdensome regulations and reporting requirements, such as Section 25-32, CGS, which requires a change of use permit for anything that constitutes "one shovel of dirt". Municipalities must prepare and submit extensive permit applications to the state Department of Public Health and wait for approval to perform many activities which are routine maintenance tasks. In addition to unnecessarily tying up the resources of municipal staff, this requirement also delays economic development projects that need to be completed under certain weather conditions or during certain times of the year.

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